Where Nixon did play Devil's advocate, did question others to ascertain what was known and what could be proven against him, is illustrated by his version of his March 21, 1973 Oval Office meeting with Dean and Haldeman. For long period the dominating Haldeman was silent. Nixon learned what others knew.

On the bribery and how it was handled he told Dean, "They put that under the cover of a Cuban Committee, I suppose?" (The punctuation is Nixon's, with the emphasis punctuation can impart.)

Dean. Well, they had a Cuban committee and they had some of it was given to Hunt's lawyer, who in turn passed it out. You know, when Hunt's wife was flying to Chicago with $10,000 she was actually, I understand after the fact now, was going to pass that money to one of the Cubans - to meet him in Chicago and pass it to somebody there.

P. (Unintelligible) but I would certainly keep that cover for whatever it is worth! (Bantam, p.143)

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A few seconds later Dean tells Nixon,

"...this is going to be a continuing blackmail operation by by Hunt and Liddy and the Cubans. No doubt about it....and you know Colson has talked indirectly to Hunt about commutation...not the blackmail is continuing. Hunt called one of the lawyers from the Re-Election Committee...Hunt is now demanding another $72,000 for his own personal expenses; another $50,000 to pay xxxxxx attorneys fees; $120,000...He said, I'm going to be sentenced on Friday, and I've got to get my financial affairs in order.' ..."

P. Was he talking a out Ellsberg?

D. Ellsberg and apparently some other things. I don't know the full extent of it. (143-4)

As Dean got the message, Hunt's threats were against Ehrlichman and Krogh: "He says,'I will bring John Ehrlichman down to his knees and put him in jail. I have done other seamy things for he [sic] and Krogh, they'll never survive it.'"(144)

D."The Cubans

"D. The Cubans that were used in the Watergate were also the same Cubans that Hunt and Liddy used for this California Ellsberg thing, for the break-in out there. So they are aware of that. How high their knowledge is, is something else. Hunt and Liddy, of course, are totally aware of it, of the fact that it is right out of the White House...Mr. President, there have been a couple of things around here that I have gotten wind of..."(145)

Dean then listed some of those with knowledge that could be ruinous to Nixon. The last two were F. Lee Bailey, senior partner of McCord's lawyer, Alch, and "Bittman, who is an excellent lawyer."

P. He's got some knowledge?

D-Well, all the direct knowledge that Hunt and Liddy have, as well as all the hearsay they have...Some people's wives know. Mrs. Hunt was the savviest woman in the world. She had the whole picture together." (145-6)

This is what immediately preceeds Nixon's telling Dean to pay Hunt off.